

BIRD NOTES FROM LONG ISLAND.

BY WILLIAM DUTCHER.

"Betwixt th' extremes, two happier climates hold
The temper that partakes of hot and cold."

DRYDEN.

If the English poet had had Long Island in his mind when he wrote these lines he could not have more happily described its climatic conditions. Situated midway between tropical Florida and arctic Labrador, it draws from each wanderers who find there conditions sufficiently congenial to attract them beyond the border of their habitats. The following records will show, with force, how extremes may meet and make new records or substantiate old or vague ones.

Urinator arcticus. BLACK-THROATED LOON.—This is the first positive record of this species on Long Island, and also in New York State, and is probably one of the very few specimens that have been taken in the United States. Mr. J. P. Giraud, Jr., does not give it in his 'Birds of Long Island,' published in 1844, although Mr. George N. Lawrence includes it in his list published in 1866, notwithstanding there is not a specimen in his collection, now in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. In Volume X of the 'Pacific Railroad Reports,' published in 1858, Mr. Lawrence, who wrote the history of a portion of the water birds, says, "I have never been so fortunate as to meet with an American specimen of this bird." In the 'North American Birds,' by Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway it is considered "very rare, and not even positively known to occur in the United States." (Water Birds, Vol. II, p. 453.) The only United States record of which I know is of one shot in Sandusky Bay in 1880 (vide Wheaton's 'Birds of Ohio,' p. 565). It is with great pleasure, therefore, that I am able, through the kindness of M. J. Earley, Esq., of this city, to record the capture of a full-plumaged adult male. I append his letter.

New York, May 16, 1893.

Dear Sir:

The bird which I sent to Mr. Wallace, taxidermist, to be mounted, and which you inform me is a Black-throated Diver, was killed by Gus Merritt, of City Island, on Saturday morning, April 29, between Sands Point lighthouse and Execution lighthouse. He was one of a party of young men who left City Island in the middle of the night to lie in line for Ducks between Sands Point lighthouse and Execution lighthouse. At daylight on Saturday morning the bird flew from the east,

and was killed by him as it passed over his boat. I received it from Mr. Merritt a few days afterwards and sent it to Mr. Wallace where you saw it.

Yours, very truly,

M. J. EARLEY.

The specimen while yet in the flesh was brought to the attention of Mr. L. S. Foster by Mr. Wallace, who, after he had skinned it, gave me the body for sexing. I found the sexual organs very fully developed and the bird very fat. Most of the skeleton has been preserved, and is now in the osteological collection of the American Museum of Natural History.

Branta nigricans. BLACK BRANT.—The following letter from Mr. George N. Lawrence, dated September 9, 1889, is of great interest: "I send an account of a Black Brant I saw lately at Babylon. I think this is the second specimen obtained on Long Island, the other being in the Museum of the Long Island Historical Society. In the office of the Watson House I saw a fine specimen which was killed this spring in the Great South Bay. On inquiry I found it was shot by William Saxton, a noted gunner and bayman. I went to see him to get any facts concerning its acquisition that he was able to give. He said Brant were unusually plenty in the spring, and one day while lying at his decoys he saw a flock of about thirty individuals approaching, and as they were passing at a long range he fired and knocked out five. On picking them up he noticed one very black in color and of rather larger size than the others; he at once concluded it was a Black Brant, of which he had often heard his father speak, though he had never seen one. He sold it with other birds to a dealer, from whom it was purchased by Mr. Stetson."

Tantalus loculator. WOOD IBIS.—This species is new to Long Island, not having been included in any previous list. This specimen was brought to my attention by Mr. John C. Knoess, taxidermist, of Riverhead, who mounted it and published a note of its capture in the 'Republican Watchman' of Greenport, Suffolk Co., under date of August 16, 1890. Subsequently Mr. C. A. Schellinger, who owns the specimen, wrote me that he shot the bird June 21, 1890, in a swamp north of East Marion; it was alone and is the only one of the kind ever seen there.

Nycticorax violaceus. YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON.—Mr. Giraud dismisses this southern Heron with few words, merely saying, "The Yellow-crowned Heron seldom extends its visits to Long Island."¹ His statement, written in 1844, would apply today just as well, for it is only now that I am able to make my first record of this species during a period of fifteen years' collecting. Mr. A. D. Lott, one of my valued correspondents, wrote to me that a specimen of *N. violaceus* had been caught alive, in the latter part of April, in a swamp near the village of Freeport, Queens Co. He adds, "We have never seen a bird like it before."

¹ 'Birds of Long Island,' p. 281.